

TO: AKC Performance Dept.

FR: RAC - Subcommittee on Rules

Report and Recommendations for 2007

Introduction:

Following the active discussion of various rule proposals held at the NARC stake in June of '07, the Rules Subcommittee decided to revisit its proposals for '07 to reflect a number of comments and criticism made at the June meeting. The Rules Subcommittee has no unique insight into the desirability of rules changes and welcomes the input from interested field trial competitors. More involvement by field trialers in discussions about rule changes can only improve the clarity and understanding of our rules.

A. THE QUALITY OF JUDGING

We have considered steps to improve the quality of judging by increasing the experience required for approval of a person to judge his/her first stake in which championship points can be awarded. In this regard we have not ignored opportunities to improve the knowledge and understanding of new judges by required reading and tests to insure an understanding of field trial rules. We believe that such requirements would be helpful but should be imposed by the AKC as part of the approval process and not by the adoption of rules.

Chapter 5 of the Rules governs the approval of judges. As now written this chapter provides that a field trial club may submit the name of any reputable person who is in good standing with the American Kennel Club. We proposed to Amend Chapter 5 and paragraph 23 of Chapter 14 to insure that new judges gain some experience before judging an all-age stake. We recognize that locating judges is difficult, but we believe that simply selecting a "warm body" is not enough. It is more important to improve the quality of judging.

Proposal I. Amend Chapter 5 in the following respects:

Section 1

Insert in line three after the word "is" the following words:
an amateur and

Section 2

Insert in line five after the word "are" the following words:
amateurs and

Section 3

Insert in line one after the word "advertised" the following words:
Judge or any substitute Judge

Section 5

Adopt a new Section 5 to Chapter 5 which would read as follows:

Upon receipt of a request any field trial club may, with the approval of the designated stake judges, authorize a person who is an amateur in good standing with the American Kennel Club and who has not previously judged an all-age stake to participate as an "Apprentice Judge" at an all-age stake. Such person shall, at his or her own expense, listen to and observe all aspects of the all-age stake including the entire set-up day; the conduct of the stake itself

including call backs and the placement process as well as all mechanical aspects of the stake. The report of the Field Trial Secretary to the American Kennel Club shall include the name and address of any Apprentice Judge and the identity of the stake observed. No person may participate as an apprentice Judge in more than one all age stake at any given field trial.

Proposal II.

Amend paragraph 23 of Chapter 14 dealing with the experience required to judge an all-age stake carrying championship points as follows:

Add after the first section of paragraph 23 a second paragraph which, if approved, shall take effect on July 1, 2009.

No person who has not previously judged an all-age stake shall be approved to judge a stake carrying championship points unless that person has satisfied at least one of the following requirements:

a. Completion of two assignments as an Apprentice Judge pursuant to the terms of Section 5 of Chapter Five; or

b. Completion of one assignment as an Apprentice Judge and experience as the judge of two, or more, minor stakes; or

c. Experience as the handler of a dog in fifteen or more all-age stakes in the previous three years resulting in the award of a judges' award of merit or a place in, at least, one such stake.

B. MOVEMENT OF RETIRED GUNS

The next issue we considered is the intent and proper application of Paragraph 8 of the Standard Procedure governing the movement of retired guns. The inconsistencies in current retirement practices are commonplace. The issues include (1) the timing of any movement by retiring guns to ensure the running dog is not distracted by the movement; (2) the distance and direction of such retirement to minimize paths that lead the running dog away from the fall; and (3) the use of adequate concealment.

There is some disagreement among the Subcommittee on Rules about the following proposals. The criticisms are basically that the restrictions adversely limit the discretion of judges in setting tests. The majority of the Subcommittee believes that the present rule is so often misunderstood or ignored that clarification is desirable and should lead to better management of retired gun tests without intruding on the reasonable discretion of the judges in setting tests.

Proposal III.

(1.) Amend Paragraph 8 of the Standard Procedure by deleting from the first paragraph the entire present language beginning with line eight and continuing to the end of the first paragraph and substituting in place thereof the following language:

After birds have been shot all Guns shall remain quiet and shall not move their positions unless and until so instructed by the Judges. Judges may instruct Guns and their associated bird throwers to retire from the sight of the dog, or dogs, on line provided that every reasonable effort must be made to insure that the movement of retired Guns is only permitted at a time and under conditions that minimize the chance that the running dog will be distracted by such movements.

(2.) Add the following language to Paragraph 8 of the Standard Procedure immediately following the language set forth in Proposal III (1.) above.

The permitted movement of retired guns and their associated bird throwers should be limited to the minimum distance required for effective concealment. Such retirement should be in

a direction away from the direction in which the bird is thrown.

(3.) Amend the existing second paragraph of Section 8. of the Standard Procedure as follows:

Delete the first four lines of the existing second paragraph and substitute the following words;

“Retired Guns and throwers should be concealed by a blind that provides complete coverage, adequate space, and has natural camouflage to conceal the distinctive shape of the blind. The blind must be located as to...”

Continue with existing line 5 to the end of the section.

C. POISONED BIRD BLINDS

The next issue we considered deals with the current uses of poisoned birds in connection with blind retrieves, and the question of whether such uses should be modified. Current practices raise several issues.

The primary question relates to the practice of planting a bird, or birds, unseen by the running dog, at a location that may cause the running dog to smell the hidden bird on the way to the blind. The problem is obvious. Unlike the viewed poisoned bird which the handler can direct his/her dog to ignore, the hidden bird is, as far as the running dog is aware, simply the blind that the dog believes should be retrieved. While it is possible to identify such situations as consistent with actual hunting conditions, the problem is that this practice turns the blind retrieve, an exercise in control, into a test more likely to be based on luck or random chance.

Proposal IV.

(1.) Amend paragraph 20 of the Standard Procedure by adding the following paragraph after the existing first paragraph.

A poisoned bird or birds, (but not more than two) may be used as a diversion in a blind retrieve, but only if the poisoned bird (or birds) is/are thrown or shot so that the running dog has a clear view of each such poisoned bird as it is thrown or shot. No bird which the running dog does not see may be placed and hidden on the general path to a blind. Nothing in this provision precludes the use of visible flyer crates, bagged birds, placed at the location of previous gun stations, or bird throwers as diversions from the blind.

D. CANADIAN DOGS IN AKC ALL-AGE STAKES

It has been suggested to the Rules Committee that a provision covering the qualifications of Canadian Kennel Club registered retrievers should be added to the rules. We agree but believe that the standard for such qualifications should be as simple to administer as possible.

Proposal V. Qualifications of Canadian Kennel Club Registered Retrievers

Add to Chapter 14, Rules for Retriever Field Trials, Section 10 the following paragraph at the end of the current Section 10.

Any retriever registered with the Canadian Kennel Club who has been awarded a Canadian Field Championship or a Canadian Amateur Field Championship shall be qualified to participate in any AKC licensed or member retriever field trial stake, including any Open All-Age, Limited All-Age, Special All-Age or Restricted All-Age Stake or any Amateur All-Age Stake subject to the additional requirements of an Owner-Handler Amateur All-Age Stake provided that the Canadian registered dog has satisfied the requirements for admission to the all-age stake in question by achieving the required level of success in either Canadian trials or AKC trials in the same fashion as required for AKC registered dogs. Subject to Chapter 8, Sections 1 & 2.

E. ELIMINATION OF WALK UPS

The stated goals of the walk up are to save time and to reward the dog who comes promptly to the line, sits down and quickly picks out and identifies the bird throwers. It is intended to penalize the dog who is either out of control, or is lethargic, uninterested and slow to pick out the bird throwers without lengthy lining to the various bird boys in the field. The problems frequently encountered in walk ups include inconsistent timing on the part of the judges in calling for the birds, and the fact that frequently the placements, the distances and visibility of the guns are such that they are difficult to pick out quickly by even the most alert dog. In those circumstances the dogs may well fail the marks because they didn't have time or opportunity to see the falls, rather than because they showed a lack of marking skills. Such tests make chance or luck, not marking skill, a primary focus.

The argument that a walk up saves valuable time is of doubtful validity. Any such savings is very likely to be more than off set by the added length of hunts by dogs that simply did not see one or more of the marks.

Proposal VI.

A. Delete the first sentence of the second paragraph of Paragraph 25 of the STANDARD PROCEDURE and also delete the first three words "in other tests" in the next sentence so that the second paragraph of Paragraph 25 begins with the words "During the period...and continues to the end of said second paragraph.

B. Add the following third paragraph to Paragraph 25 of the STANDARD PROCEDURE:

After the running dog comes to line in a test that includes marks, the judges shall allow a reasonable time for the handler of the running dog to identify the locations of the guns and bird boys and to line up the dog. After such time the judges may notify the handler that the birds are about to be called for and thereafter signal for them. When so notified the handler may immediately verbally steady the dog prior to the birds being thrown.

Respectfully Submitted,

RAC Subcommittee on Rules

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Note:

Proposal VI A.. If adopted, would eliminate all references to walk ups from the rules. Proposal VI B. if adopted, would preclude the use of walk ups.